

Atlanta Design Notes

Units:

Many sources give units and tables of organization for the Atlanta campaign, but few give comprehensive listings of units and organizations for all of the particular engagements of concern in the battles portrayed in the Atlanta game. During the period reports were often not filed for all organizations, particularly for the Confederates. The starting units for the various scenarios have had to be pieced together from tables given in the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (O.R.), supplemented by reports, correspondence, accounts written by participants, and the writings of historians on the campaign. Unfortunately, the writers have had interests other than supporting game design, and consequently have left out many details of interest to the gamer but otherwise insignificant.

Confederate units are based primarily on those present with the Armies of Tennessee and Mississippi on July 10, 1864 as given in O.R. vol. 38, part III, pp 654-661. The unit strengths, down to a division level, are based on the returns of that same date, p 679. The "Effective total present" numbers are divided by 100 to determine the number of points of infantry or cavalry in each command. For a few particular brigades, for example Govan's and Reynolds's, reports exist that mention unit strengths. In other cases, the total strength is allocated among brigades of a given division based on estimates found in O.R. vol. 38 Part V, pp178-179. The annotation for this listing says that it was found in an abandoned rebel camp on July 18 and inserted into the records of the Army of the Cumberland. The strengths in this listing are rough estimates that cannot be entirely trusted, but for lack of better method they have been used for allocation within each division. In some cases, such as the cavalry (not detailed in the mentioned listing) an allocation has been made based roughly on the number of regiments. By this time in the war regimental strengths varied widely. I have assumed that regiments from Texas, Arkansas, or Missouri would be quite small, those from Union occupied territory such as Tennessee or Kentucky larger, and that those from Alabama, Georgia or another state in Confederate control would be relatively large. Where brigades of a division would seem to be nearly equal (especially if just above or below a "breakpoint" in firepower strength such as 11 or 12 points, the strengths were arbitrarily varied a point or two so that the division's total firepower would be closer to average for the number of points.

Almost no information on the Georgia militia could be found except in G.W. Smith's writings. He mentions having about 3000 organized as two brigades, and this force was in the field in June. Battles and Leaders, Vol IV, p292 lists 4 brigades, and Smith mentions having "no more than 5000" effectives during the seige (O.R. vol 38 part III p971). Yet he reports only 700 with him in the Eastern defenses on July 20 (O.R. vol 38 part V p895). Inclusion of 2 brigades with 2000 effectives for July 22 is a compromise, based on the fact that additional men may have been collected from elsewhere in Atlanta by that date. Gholson's brigade (into which Youngblood's battalion of mechanics from Columbus is lumped) is mentioned by Reynolds as being present in the Seige lines on July 26 (O.R. vol 38 part III p926).

The Union units are based primarily on the listing of O.R. Vol. 38, part I, pp89-114. The strengths of the units, down to division level, is based on the Union army returns for June 30, 1864 found in O.R. vol. 38, Part IV, pp651-654. The number of

"Men present for duty" was the starting point for unit strength derivation. In order to adjust to the same basis as the Confederate strengths, two adjustments were made. First, the number of effectives was assumed to be in the same ratio to the number of men as for the Confederates. This factor was a multiplication by 95.6%. Second, the difference in date from June 30 to July 10 due to attrition had to be taken into account. Infantry numbers for the Confederates declined by a factor of 94.4% during that period, omitting from the calculation units which changed in composition (Stephenson's and Walker's divisions). This same factor was applied to the June 30 Union effective strengths to yield estimated July 10 strengths. Finally, the Union return includes artillery strength, which has to be deducted. 27 men per gun were subtracted from each division strength, based on the ratio of artillery men per gun in the June 30 Army of the Ohio report, O.R. vol 38, part IV, p650. Allocation of the strength to brigades within each division was most often on a basis of regiment count unless other information was found (taking into account the likely size of the regiment based on number: later numbered regiments were a guess to be larger.) A number of Union brigades had regiments detached to guard bridges or other points in the rear. Estimates for these numbers were deducted from the brigade strengths.

Modification to unit strengths for the start of scenarios following prior battles since July 10 are in many cases estimates, especially for the Confederates, for which very few reports are available. This is especially true for Ezra Church. The four battles involving significant losses prior to Ezra Church were the Union crossing of Peachtree Creek on July 19, Peachtree Creek on July 20, Bald Hill on July 21, and Atlanta on July 22.

Estimation of unit morale was more difficult. Morale estimates were based not just on the performance of a unit in the engagements in and around Atlanta, but on the earlier performance of the unit as well, if available. Veteran units that had been in the field for a considerable period, such as those of the Army of the Tennessee, were given a "B" rating given no particular evidence to merit a different value. Those of less experience, such as those of the Army of the Ohio, which had fought relatively few pitched battles, were typically rated "C". Union cavalry, which performed poorly throughout most of the campaign, was generally also given a "C" rating. During the rating process, reference was also made to the ratings of various units in other games, especially those portraying Chikamauga and, for XX Corps, Thunder at the Crossroads. A particularly distinguished or undistinguished brigade commander also was a consideration. Space does not permit a detailed accounting of particular unit ratings.

Leader ratings are necessarily subjective. As a guideline, a minimally competent officer was rated a "1". One with military training and everyday competence was rated a "2". An experienced and competent commander who had demonstrated that in the past was rated a "3". A few brilliant commanders, Sherman, Cleburne, and Wheeler were given a "4" rating. One could argue that Sherman did not rate a "4" based on his tactical and execution abilities (for example, at Chattanooga), which is the only attribute which the rating affects in this game. (The player must supply the strategic and operational skill.) A number of commanders are rated low based not so much on their ability as on the circumstances. Cheatham as a corps commander was in a new position, commanding a different corps than the one in which he had been a division commander. S.D. Lee's situation is similar. A number of division commanders were in similar circumstances. It

could be that MacPherson should be a "4", but his timidity at Rensselaer argues against that. I would suggest that if you want MacPherson as a "4", make Sherman a "3". Time does not permit extended discussion of all of the ratings.

Artillery strengths are listed in the army returns. Most artillery units are 4 strength points (12 guns) because the Union forces generally attached two 6 gun batteries to each division, and the Confederates had three or four battalions of three 4 gun batteries attached to each corps. The Confederate reserve artillery, four additional battalions, was later allocated to the corps, but was still operating as a reserve during the early part of the time period portrayed. (O.R. vol 38 part V p895: message from Mackall to Wheeler mentions that G.W. Smith with all of the reserve artillery was in the works on the East side of Atlanta on July 20th.) The 28 light artillery and 9 siege weapons credited to the Confederates are based on Chas. Swett's report of artillery materiel lost in the evacuation (O.R. vol 38, part III, p684). As this artillery was manned by the militia and was not reported normally, this is the only reference to it found. In a number of instances, batteries listed for a division in the Union returns were detached for service in rear areas. In a few cases artillery which was not listed as detached, yet conspicuous by the absence of mention during engagements of its parent command, was also assumed to be detached. (The 1st Minn. Lt. battery of 4/XVII corps seems to be in this category for July 22nd.)

Maps:

The areas selected for the maps were chosen to allow considerable scope for maneuver during the play of the game. It was important to include Decatur on the East, since that town was a starting point for MacPherson's drive on Atlanta of the 20th and 21st. On the West, the vicinity of Ezra church allows some scope for Union maneuver on that flank, although some important North-South roads just off of the map edge would have been included had there been space. The division between East and West maps (and between the Atlanta and Peachtree Creek games) was chosen based on the difficult terrain around Clear Creek. It would have been difficult for a coherent operation to span both East and West maps due to the paucity of roads and difficult terrain. This may enable players wishing to play a campaign scenario to disconnect the East and West maps without hurting the game. (Indeed, perhaps they can simultaneously take turns on the different maps.) This makes play of the campaign game more practical without a large single table. On the North it would have been nice to include Buckhead, but not essential. The southern boundary coincides with important crossroads around Utoy Church (SW) and the Akers house (SE) which make good entry or exit points.

The landform (elevation) for the Atlanta maps is based on modern U.S. Geological Survey maps, under the assumption that this would have changed very little. (In the case of embankments or reservoirs and dams a guess was made as to the original form.

The placement of roads is based on a number of period maps, primarily those in the Official Records Atlas. Plate LXXXVIII map 1. was an important source, and a number of others including that in Cox's book were helpful. Many maps conflict in detail, even on the placement of primary roads. The placement was made more difficult by the fact that the period maps were not surveyed to modern standards. Local distances

can be off by as much as a factor of 2 or so, with errors in placement of several hexes. In placing major roads, it was usually possible to find a modern road which follows the same path as the shown on a period map. When this was true, the placement was based on the modern road on the USGS map. (Peachtree Road, Briarcliff Road, and most of the Atlanta city roads are examples of this category.) Minor roads in most cases could not be reconciled to modern roads. Their placement is based on relative placement on period maps to identifiable modern landmarks (streams, other roads). In many cases, this is a matter of crude guesswork. The period maps differ considerably in the minor roads shown and their placement. I generally placed a road if it was shown on any map, under the assumption that a minor road might be omitted by some sources, but would not likely be shown if it did not in fact exist.

Major streams are a consequence of landform, and were taken from the USGS maps. The period maps show more streams (and a longer reach for others) than is shown on the USGS maps. Streams were added based on period maps but conforming to the modern landform, where these could be reconciled. (Some stream connections on period maps are clearly impossible.) Only a few maps showed swamps. Those on the map are from such sources; no doubt other swampy areas existed, but for lack of information are not shown. The classification of waterways as "creek" or "stream" is subjective, although Peachtree Creek is clearly in the former category.

Woods was the most difficult terrain feature to develop. Some period maps do show woods. The most helpful of these was the O.R. Atlas, plate LXXXVIII map 1. Where woods were shown on any map, they would generally be placed on the game map. Large areas of the O.R. maps show no woods, but this cannot be taken as evidence of a lack of woods, especially where the woods marking "tapers off". The assumption had to be made that areas outside Atlanta would be wooded unless there was evidence to the contrary, even if no woods was shown on any map. Areas having no houses marked, especially if there were no roads, were assumed wooded. Creek bottoms, especially in sloped areas, were assumed wooded. Both armies were engaged in deforestation, especially around the siege works, which also distorts the maps and requires guesswork on woods placement. For areas on or near the battlefields of July 20, 22, or 28 William Scaife's maps from The Atlanta Campaign were used as a source.

Fortifications were based on those shown on numerous maps. However, it was necessary to distinguish among these to determine which would be present at the beginning of the campaign. Scaife's book was helpful in distinguishing the original (Grant) defenses from the later "Siege lines". The Confederate defenses north of Decatur are shown on a few maps, but one such (O.R. Atlas plate VXXXVIII 2.) is by Poe, a reliable source. It is assumed that these predated the campaign. The other outer works in the area of the NE and SE works were presumed dug by Cheatham on the 20th or 21st, since his Corps was not in this position originally. (See Hood, Advance and Retreat, pp166 and 167.) Hence, they are not shown on the map. The Union works on the SE map, being breastworks, would normally not be shown. However, it is expected that the July 22 scenario will be the most often played, and their presence makes administration of the game easier.

Cultural features (houses, etc.) were placed where shown on any of the maps. Bridges were placed where shown on any map. Indeed, the presence of a bridge over Peachtree Creek was taken as a distinction that would lead to designation of a road as primary. No map showed bridges over streams, but primary roads that bridge Peachtree Creek were presumed to have good crossings of other streams as well. The various important structures shown within Atlanta are based on Scaife's book.

In addition to the references given, William Scaife and particularly W. Keith Beason gave considerable help in reviewing and developing the maps.